

## Harry S. Truman (1884-1972)

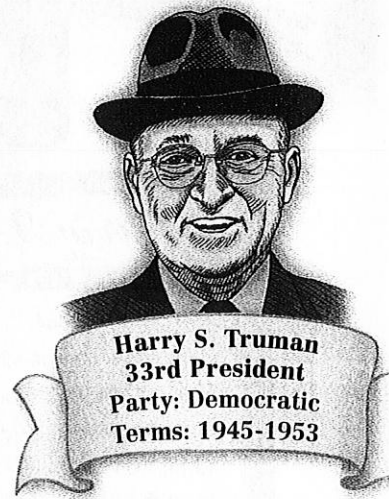
Harry S. Truman had served only eight-two days as vice president when Franklin Roosevelt's death pushed him into the presidency. As a young man, Truman was not able to afford to go to college, but he had read every book in the Independence, Missouri, library by the time he was fifteen. He entered politics as a county official, then was elected senator. Roosevelt chose Truman to be his running mate for 1944 because his last vice president was seen to be too liberal.

Truman proved to be an energetic president who did not hesitate to attack his critics. In his first term, Truman tried to pass new civil rights laws and expand Social Security, but Congress refused to cooperate. Truman's greatest challenges came from abroad, however. World War II came to an end in Europe soon after he took office, but the war continued in the Pacific. Truman decided to use the newly developed atomic bomb on the Japanese. It is estimated that more than 130,000 people were killed in the atomic explosions at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Historians still argue over whether or not the bombing was needed to end the war and therefore save lives that might have been lost in an invasion of Japan.

At the end of the war, Truman put through the Marshall Plan, a vast aid program for Europe. He also came to Berlin's aid when the Soviets threatened to take control of it in 1948. With roads closed, he ordered planes to carry supplies to the parts of the city that were controlled by the United States and its allies. The airlift succeeded, and the Soviets opened the city again.



Bess "The Boss" Truman.



During his second term, Truman focused much of his attention on the Korean War. In 1950, communist North Korea invaded South Korea. Truman sent troops to Korea, then asked for backing from the United Nations, an international organization that had been formed in 1945. Truman was very concerned about stopping the spread of communism.

Truman's wife and daughter were so much a part of his life that White House staff called them "the Three Musketeers." His wife, Bess, often gave him valued advice, and Truman called her "the Boss."

## Harry S. Truman

**Born:** May 8, 1884  
**Birthplace:** Lamar, Missouri  
**Political Party:** Democratic  
**State Represented:** Missouri  
**Term:** April 12, 1945–January 20, 1953  
**Died:** December 26, 1972  
**Vice President:** (1) vacant  
 (2) Alben Barkley (D)



Harry S. Truman was vice president when Franklin D. Roosevelt died. Truman had been vice president for only 82 days when he became president. Truman quickly adopted FDR's programs, renaming them the "Fair Deal." This son of a mule trader and farmer also carried out Roosevelt's plans to establish the United Nations. However, Truman became a great leader in his own right. He helped arrange Germany's surrender in 1945. And in September of 1945, Truman used the atomic bomb on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to end World War II. After the war, he worked for equal rights for all people in the United States. Truman did not run again after he finished his second term in 1953. Truman's hard work and honesty made him one of our strongest presidents.

### SHOW WHAT YOU KNOW

Match the items in each column. Write the correct letter on the line.

\_\_\_\_\_ The president before Truman

\_\_\_\_\_ Truman was president at the end of this war

\_\_\_\_\_ Truman's decision to use this weapon ended World War II

\_\_\_\_\_ An important ideal Truman worked for

a World War II

b FDR

c equal rights

d atomic bomb

### FIND OUT MORE

What are the goals of the United Nations today? \_\_\_\_\_